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THE REGENERATED OTTOMAN EMPIRE.

BY MUNDJI BEY, TURKISH CONSUL-GENERAL AT NEW YORK.

THE dawn of the regeneration of the Ottoman Empire, hailed by the re-establishment of our Constitution of 1876, may appear to be by no means free from menacing clouds of future political and internal intrigues; but I have reason to believe firmly that the surprising outcome of the short and bloodless revolution in the Ottoman Empire which compelled the reluctant Sultan to yield to the wishes of the nation has opened a clear path to the goal of freedom.

There are students of history and political science in Europe, as well as in America, who are inclined to think that a great reform movement, like the one now inaugurated in the Ottoman Empire, cannot be accomplished without bloodshed. Sooner or later, their opinion is, the world will witness the rise of reactionary elements who will induce Sultan Abdul Hamid to resume, once more, his detested rôle of autocracy. They may have reasons for their deduction, but thousands of free-minded and liberal Ottomans, knowing well the internal situation in Turkey, are assured that it is impossible for either the Sultan or his camarilla to suppress the new Constitution, and retrograde to the old reign of despotism.

In order to understand the development of the present situation in the Ottoman Empire, we must go back to the reign of Abdul Medjid, the father of our present monarch. The readers of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW will perhaps recollect that, when Sultan Abdul Medjid granted the famous charter of 1853, the Ottoman Empire was in a state of utter decay and the independence of the State was in jeopardy. The "Hatt-i-Humayoun" of Sultan Abdul Medjid, promulgated from the Gulhane Palace, saved Turkey from dismemberment and partition, and

renewed our friendly relations with Great Britain and France. The integrity of the Empire was saved, and it remained on the political map of the world unmolested.

Sultan Medjid's charter, for some reason or another, did not bring about the desired results within the country, and when his brother, Abdul Aziz, the unfortunate Sultan, ascended the Ottoman throne, the situation was full of peril.

The Empire's vital forces—her army, her navy and her financial credit abroad—were in a critical condition. The rumblings of revolutionary movements were being heard from all corners of the Empire. The political testament of Sultan Abdul Medjid, elaborated by the celebrated Grand Vizier, Moustafa Reshid Pasha, was doomed to become a dead letter. The European Powers, hopeless of the Ottoman independence and regeneration, were eagerly looking forward to the approaching day of our disintegration.

Statesmen of world-wide fame, like Ali Pasha and Fouad Pasha, did their utmost to save the Empire from its downfall, and to reinforce the rule of Sultan Abdul Aziz; but, in spite of all their patriotic zeal and statesmanship, their efforts failed. Although our navy was decidedly strong, and the army equally so, the two forces did not prevent Turkey from losing a large part of her territory in 1877, in the war with Russia.

During the reign of Sultan Abdul Aziz, the situation appeared to be encouraging. The press was free, public education was making headway, and our commerce and agriculture progressing. But, unfortunately, the microbe of decay proved more powerful than our statesmen's efforts toward regeneration.

In consequence of this state of affairs, internal disturbances and revolution in the European provinces, together with a financial crisis, became so menacing that the Cabinet decided to put an end to the rule of Sultan Abdul Aziz. He was dethroned in 1876, to the great satisfaction of the Ottoman nation, as well as of Europeans.

Sultan Mourad V succeeded his uncle. He was liberal, progressive and generous, but the opportunity was denied him of putting into effect his reform schemes. His opponents proclaimed him insane, and entrusted the throne to his brother, Abdul Hamid, who hastened the country toward final ruin and downfall.

The independence of a State means the freedom of the nation. A progressive, liberal and constitutional government, beyond any doubt, is stronger and better than an absolute monarchy, where the will of one man can rule and ruin a country. Midhat Pasha deserves the credit for the initiation of the Constitution in Turkey. His prudence and his patriotism were well represented in the great work which he accomplished, in inducing Sultan Abdul Hamid to proclaim a Constitution on December 19th, 1876.

Unfortunately, to put it briefly, Sultan Abdul Hamid was not in sympathy with the progressive programme, and he was not sincere when he consented to grant the Constitution. But Midhat Pasha had set his hopes on the Parliament, as the means of checking the despotic rule of the monarch and of reforming the country.

The war with Russia was declared in 1877, and Sultan Abdul Hamid seized the opportunity to abolish the Parliament and do away with all patriots. Some of them were murdered, some imprisoned, and others exiled. They were men of enlightenment and ability, and the Ottoman nation will always mourn the loss of its best sons, the fathers of our liberty.

The war was disastrous for us. Much territory in Europe and in Asia Minor was lost. The pride and dignity of the nation were lowered. But this caused no regret to Abdul Hamid. He felt no shame to see the throne of Osman Khan Elghazi, so dear to Ottoman hearts, exposed to the scorn of the world. The hostility, antagonism and detestation of his subjects did not disturb his peace; he was satisfied that they feared him.

The terrible war, its consequences, the despotic rule, tyranny and persecution, exhausted the natural resources, strength and energy of the nation, and initiated a period of struggle and revolution. Turkey grew weaker and weaker day after day, left an open door for foreign intervention and put the control of the country's independence into alien hands. During the last thirty-two years, our navy has lost its importance, while the army became stronger and well organized; it was led, however, not against our enemies, but on the contrary against the nation, against the peaceful inhabitants. Brother was led against brother, and public officers sought their promotion by spying upon each other. The corruption reached such a degree that even Sultan Abdul Hamid himself came to hate his own rule.

The result was the decay, the ruin and destruction of the Empire. During this period, we lost all our national fortune, our commerce went into foreign hands; it had been previously in the hands of our fellow countrymen—Armenians and loyal Greeks. The nation was subjected to humiliation, poverty and destitution.

The power and vocation of the Sublime Porte were transferred to the Yildiz Kiosk. The Grand Vizier was humiliated to play the rôle of a valet in the hands of the palace officials. And the helm of state was in the entire control of a small circle of minions and parasites. In matters concerning the relations with foreign Powers, the Sublime Porte became nothing more than an office of registry.

Our representatives in foreign lands, instead of looking after Ottoman interests, in order to strengthen our economic and friendly relations with foreign countries, became simply police agents and spy lieutenants to watch innocent political refugees, and send to the Yildiz reports of imaginary plots and revolutions.

The Sultan, fearful and suspicious, trusting no one, believing in no one, created the spy system, the most expensive and most complex of all institutions in Turkey. Every move of everybody was watched. Even three persons could not gather around a table. They were spied upon. If there were seven hundred and fifty thousand Mohammedan inhabitants in Constantinople, five hundred thousand of them were spies.

In such a state of affairs it was very natural that the Ottoman financial standing should fall, and credit vanish. It was impossible for the Ottoman treasury to negotiate loans. This brought about the necessity of handing over to the Germans our customs duties, our waterways, railroads and other sources of revenue and production, not only in the capital, but in Asia Minor and at other points of the Empire.

The annual allowance of the Sultan was one million Turkish pounds, but he spent between seven and eight millions a year, most of it wasted in fighting imaginary plots and revolutions. Corrupt palace officials around him found a means of accumulating a fortune just by whispering a few words in the ears of their master. The country's annual expenditure was twenty-five million Turkish pounds, while the revenue never exceeded twelve millions.

The people year after year lost their confidence in the Sultan, and discontent increased with speed among Turks, Armenians, Macedonians and Albanians.

The wholesale butchery of three hundred thousand Armenians, directed by the Yildiz Kiosk clique, is too well known to be recapitulated here. We lived for centuries with the Armenians. Through their native industry and intelligence they had been always most useful subjects of the Empire, and no cause was given by them for the cruel persecution. It was only a conspiracy, the scheme of a few palace grafters to make a fortune out of Armenian blood.

The Sultan, mindful only of his personal safety and absolute rule, ignored entirely all consideration of what the future consequences might be. Like Louis XV, he believed in "After me the Deluge." He wanted to rule and rule alone, and his Machiavellian policy made no discrimination as to race or religion. During his thirty years of reign, at least one hundred thousand Turkish families have suffered his cruel persecution. Thousands were exiled, imprisoned, poisoned, sunk in the sea or murdered at midnight in the Yildiz.

This misrule in Turkey became a by-word among the nations, and lowered the dignity and pride of the nation. It was not only enlightened Ottomans who became dissatisfied with the situation; but soldiers and officers also, whose salaries were neglected for months and even years, joined in the march of the reformers' army. Had Turkey remained in the same situation a decade more, it would have been wiped out of Europe and Asia. Her corruption paralleled that of the old Roman Empire.

The Young Turkey movement, led by able patriots, men trained in Western civilization, although in existence for a score of years, spread within the last year with great rapidity and became the dominant power in the country. The fact that Young Turks joined Armenian and other revolutionary organizations, made their cause common, and strengthened their fighting force for liberty.

The Armenian revolutionists, after looking for a quarter of a century to the Signatory Powers of the Berlin Congress for the administration of reforms in Armenia, came finally to the conclusion that their hope of freedom lay in co-operation and union with Turkish and other liberal movements.

While history will record the discipline, the thorough organization and the courage of the Young Turks in achieving Ottoman independence, the Armenians will always be credited with the prudence and the diplomacy of the step they took.

The fuel for the final conflagration came from the Macedonian question. For years that unhappy spot of European Turkey had become a guerilla camp of various races — Bulgarians, Greeks, Servians, Wallachians and Albanians. Each race had its national prejudice against the others, and each its national ambition. Bulgarian Macedonians were supported by Bulgaria, Greeks by Greece, Servians by Serbia and Wallachs by Roumania. All wanted to rule and separate the province from Turkey.

The situation in Macedonia became menacing. The Austro-Russian action failed, and after Sir Edward Grey's note of last March, Russia and England came to a final understanding. The Reval meeting of the Tsar and King Edward made the Macedonian question more acute, and our patriots, Young Turks, whose programme is to save the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, grasped the situation and hastened the revolution to avert the loss of the Macedonian province and the fatal consequences thereof.

"The Committee of Ottoman Union and Progress," as the Ottoman Revolutionary Committees are named, directed the Revolutionary Committee in Macedonia to sound the bugle of revolt. The signal was given before the time designated, and the insurgent army at Uskub, Monastir, Salonica, Adrianople, all at the same time, demanded of the Sultan the re-establishment of the old Constitution and the banishment of the obnoxious camarilla at Yildiz—the real instigators of the country's misfortune and misrule. The Sultan had in all circumstances depended upon Albanian support in time of trouble, and the news of their revolt fell upon the Yildiz Kiosk like a thunderbolt.

The Constitution was granted, or rather was forced to be proclaimed, on July 24th, the day of the dawning of the new era of the Ottoman Empire. Although this Constitution is substantially the one inaugurated in 1876, and many changes are to be desired in the near future, it assures in its present form the integrity of the Empire, individual liberty, the freedom of all creeds, of the press and of education, equal legal taxation; a

Senate and a Chamber; general elections by ballot every fourth year; permanent tenure of office by judges; and many other reform measures so long desired and so urgently needed.

I do not need to dwell at length here upon the welcome benefits which will accrue to the country from the new régime. The Ottoman Empire, comprising Mohammedan and Christian races, has within itself the ability to enlighten, to uplift, to civilize the country, and to bring it to the high level of Western nations. The new regenerated Turkey will not follow the footsteps of the fighting soldiers of the sixteenth century, but will settle down to rebuild the ruins of the old days; we will study science, history, economics and all the modern resources of civilization.

Our industries, agriculture and other means of production, till now sold to foreigners by corrupt officials, will pass into native hands. Within a decade, the country, rich in natural resources, will develop from its present destitution and bankruptcy, into a land of happiness and prosperity.

The greatest change, as a consequence of the new régime, will, I am sure, be the abolition of the religious question. For centuries fanaticism has brought misfortune to our land; hereafter we will let religion abide in the mosques and in the churches and in the individual conscience, and all of us will unite under the banner of civilization, and work for the welfare of all.

Till now the Turks were the dominant and ruling race in the Empire; hereafter the country will be ruled by her citizens. The Turk, the Armenian, the Greek, the Syrian, the Jew, the Kurd, the Circassian, all will have equal opportunities; all will represent the Empire. The preference will be given not to the race or religion, but to individual ability and integrity.

Hereafter there will be no more Turkey, but a regenerated Ottoman Empire. Hereafter, instead of fighting each other, instead of brigandage, instead of slaughter of innocent human beings, we will build temples of civilization, of peace, of brotherhood and of progress.

As to our relations with our neighbors and foreign Powers, they will be friendly, and there will be no need of capitulations, which since the fifteenth century have been a means of interference in our internal affairs, and have suppressed our independence in our own country. Instead, treaties and *ententes* with other countries will safeguard our interests as well as theirs.

Our representatives in foreign countries, instead of being spies and police agents, will represent the dignity and the integrity of the Ottoman nation and will work for the economic interests of their Fatherland.

The Ottoman Empire, regenerated and reconstructed, instead of being a target for foreign intrigues, will enter the field of international politics.

Most of all I am confident that Great Britain will regain her lost prestige in Turkey; and, through her friendly relations, the regeneration of the Ottoman Empire will be assured. France was the historic friend of Turkey, and there is no reason why anything should be in the way of renewing our old amicable relations with her.

The United States of America will begin intimate relations with Turkey. Hundreds of Ottoman subjects have been educated in the universities and colleges of this country. Some of them will, no doubt, be important factors in Ottoman politics, and they will always look back to the land where they took refuge and where they obtained their education. Thousands of Ottoman subjects who will return to their homes will carry with them American ideas and American ways of living. Will not this make a good bond between the two nations?

Having all due respect for the German race, in view of the peculiar situation of our industrial and economic relations with the German Government, I will say that I hope the regenerated Ottoman Empire will peacefully settle all the economic troubles and see the return of the productive enterprises into native hands, where they rightfully belong. For to strive in order that we may realize "The Ottoman Empire for Ottomans" is our right and our duty.

The Macedonian question being settled through the establishment of the new Constitution, Austria will have no cause for interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Nor is there any cause to fear serious trouble in the direction of the small Balkan States.

Russia for the present is too busy with her internal affairs to mingle in Ottoman politics. Her neutrality is already assured. Probably it will take Russia twenty years for the final settlement of her new régime; moreover, her ambitions in the Far East cannot be said to have died away. She will not forget the repulse

she encountered in Manchuria. If the great Muscovite Power is still looking forward to the fulfilment of the will of Peter the Great—the conquest of Constantinople, where the Ottoman Parliament will meet hereafter—she may rest assured that it will remain the centre of the Ottoman nation and of Ottoman progress.

The younger generation of Turkey are looking forward to a strong, regenerated, reconstructed, enterprising and progressive Ottoman Empire. If not to-day, we will make it a reality to-morrow. We are striving to fulfil the wishes of the civilized world. Peace was demanded of us, we have peace now. And we are sure, with all our true friends, the liberty-loving people of America will extend their sympathy to the reformers in their fight for the final establishment of Ottoman freedom.

MUNDJI.